

Patient Satisfaction: Key Strategies for Better Health Care Outcomes

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Summary

Patient satisfaction is the key indicator for evaluation of health care system and measuring quality of care. It affects the quality of care and health outcome. Patient satisfaction is an alternate but an effective indicator to measure the success of nurses and health setting. Patient satisfaction is affected by various factors such as communication skill, interpersonal relationship, quality of care and behaviour of staff. Strategies like effective communication, transparency of health care-related information, empathetic hospital environment and prioritising quality outcome can be used for improving patient satisfaction. Meanwhile, nursing care is major component of healthcare services because nurse spends more time with patient in health care organisation. Therefore, measuring patient satisfaction with nursing care could be effective in improving quality of nursing services.

Keywords: Patient satisfaction, Quality of care, Health outcome

Health care delivery system has transformed dramatically with new infrastructure, advanced technology and innovative strategies to meet patient demand. As a result, quality of health care becomes a promised goal of any healthcare organisation (Xesfingi & Vozikis, 2016) while healthcare providers emphasise on evidence-based practice and health care consumers focus on cost effective healthcare. Hence, quality indicators come into play and provide valid feedback to all those involved in the planning and delivery of health care (Jan Mainz, 2016). Although there are numerous indicators used in the evaluation of quality health care, patient satisfaction remains a significant indicator (Johansson et al, 2002)

Patient satisfaction in relation to the health care received is an important health outcome for the patient (Maxwell, 1984). Health care team members provide quality care to the patients based on the need which improves health status of patient and reduces hospital stay. Nurses are an important member of healthcare teams for providing health care to the patient. Moreover, understanding the patients' concerns, needs and expectations are important for meeting the patients' expectations which help the nursing

profession for achieving a competent care to the patients (Najafi Kalyani et al, 2014).

Patient Satisfaction and Quality of Health Care

Quality of care during hospital stay of the patient in the hospital is basically monitored by the health care organisation. It is fundamental task of health care organisation to ensure effective, safe delivery of health care to the patient. Adverse incident in hospital due to unsafe delivery of care is the tenth leading cause of death and disability around the globe. Every year in low- and middle-income countries, 134 million adverse events occur with in-hospital patients due to unsafe care resulting in 2.6 million deaths.

Patient satisfaction is a tool to analyse the quality of a care and is also an established outcome indicator for healthcare system. According to Penchansky & Thomas (1981), the satisfaction levels are assessed to develop strategies for sustainable, affordable, accessible and acceptable patient care. Health System in 21st century developed a framework including six goals which endeavour to provide safe, effective, patient-centred, timely, efficient and equitable care (Committee on Quality Health Care in America IoM, 2001).

A study revealed that around two third of all adverse events occur due to unsafe delivery of care resulting in death and disability of the patient. Quality of patient care needs a comprehensive

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planning including people-centred approach. The client is the core person for receiving the comprehensive care. Nurses are the personnel who spend a lot of time with patient. They are the personnel who impact on patient experiences during their hospital stay. Nurses need to know the factors of nursing care environment to influence the patient (Kieft et al, 2014).

In 21st century, nursing is a bond that holds client's health care journey together. A nurse plays the role of care giver who provides physical care, to prevent illness and treat health conditions. In the first place, the client spells out his or her requirement in terms of what they require, prefer, and take stand on the nursing care they receive. Nurses are primarily responsible for holistic care of the patient which includes psychosocial, developmental and spiritual needs of the patients, thereby requiring awareness about the patient perception to the nursing care.

Qinyu Chen (2019) conducted a study to find association between patient satisfaction and health outcomes. The results revealed that lower socio-economic status was more likely to report poor satisfaction and physical health score was

not associated with poor satisfaction. The study concluded that patient satisfaction is a complex metric that can be affected more by performance of the care provider. Patients satisfied with their care experience improved health condition while patients with a poor health-related quality of life are often dissatisfied. Although this relationship is intuitive, the reciprocal relationship is also important which has not been studied extensively (Renzi et al, 2001).

Nursing care mainly focuses on patient to meet his or her basic human needs. Patient expectation is rising more in today's time. Public are aware about quality of care they receive in health care organisation, and wish that there should be accountability for delivering health care. Overall patient satisfaction is the ultimate approach to measure the quality of patient care (Schmitt et al, 2008). The medical care feature related to patient satisfaction includes easy access to care, helpful staff and perception of competent professionals. Traditionally, patient satisfaction is witnessed when a patient's clinical condition improves which in turn leads to increase treatment satisfaction. The Elderly Health Maintenance Organisation conducted a study to identify a causal relationship between patient satisfaction and functional and self-perceived health status, although the reverse relationship was recognised (Hall et al, 1993). Likewise, patient satisfaction is affected by treatment regimen, transportation facilities and cost of care.

Kane, Maciejewski, Finch (1998) found that the relationship between patient healthcare outcomes and patient satisfaction in clinical care is unclear. They determined that patient satisfaction is related to the level to which patient expectations are met, and these expectations may be disconnected from quality care. Whereas, Peck et al (2004) reported patient satisfaction need or 'patient-centred care' that recognises and acts on patients' expectations. Thus, patient satisfaction is a poorly understood (Nelson Mathew, 2018). Meanwhile, Nurses also have great role in determining patient satisfaction because she spends more time with patient.

Paniyadi et al (2021) reported that nurses provide 80 percent of primary healthcare. Thus, incompetency of nurses is one of the reasons for poor healthcare quality and failure to achievement the standard of quality of nursing care received by the patients. Whereas a study by Girmay et al (2018) showed that 55.8 percent had poor perception of nursing care indicating that perceived satisfaction is a major challenge of the nursing community.

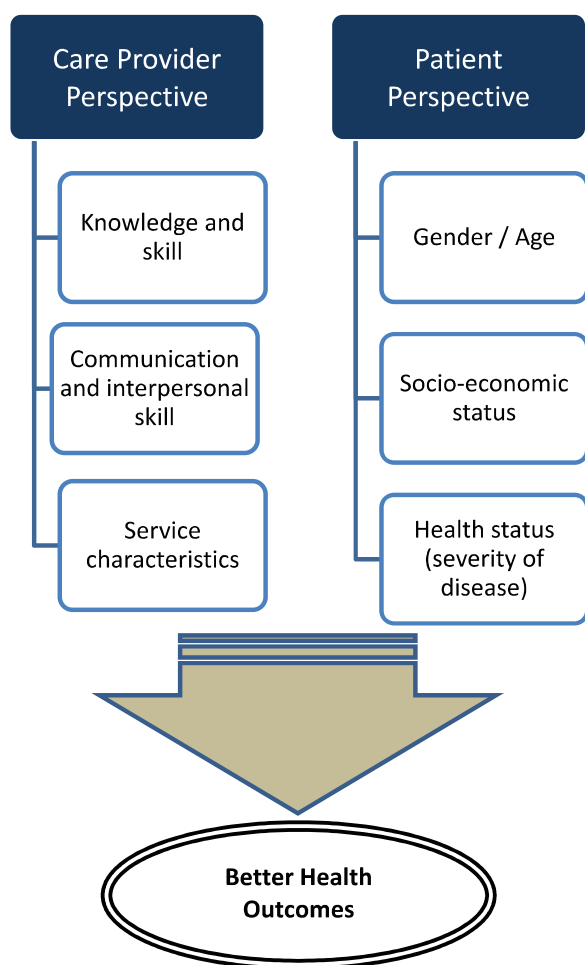


Fig 1: Factors affecting patient satisfaction.

Factors Affecting Patient Satisfaction

Patient is the core component in both health care delivery and quality assurance endeavour (Aharony & Strasser, 1993). Patient satisfaction is a multidimensional perception that incorporates health care. It is the extent to which patients are glad with their healthcare and health facility. Patients' satisfaction provides measurement to the effectiveness of the care (Edmealem et al, 2019). Various factors such as patient expectation, communication of health care provider, time spent with patient during care, availability of resources, doctors' and nurses' service attitude, expenses and environment affect patient satisfaction in health care setting (Chen et al, 2016).

Further satisfaction depends upon perspectives. It can be related to provider and patient (Adhikary et al, 2018). Factors are affected by various variables.

Patient satisfaction means patient is happy with received health care services, which was expected. Herewith, patient satisfaction is affected by multiple factors rather than single factor. Fig 1 shows that patient satisfaction depends on his/her self-perspective and also care provider perspective. Patient satisfaction is influenced by provider's perspective with certain factors such as knowledge, skilfulness, service characteristics, communication and interpersonal skill of service provider whereas, patient perspective includes age, gender, socio-economic and severity of disease. Thus, these both perspectives positively lead to better health outcome.

Chandra et al (2019) conducted a study on factors associated with patient satisfaction. The result suggested that maximum (69.3%) patients were fully satisfied. Whereas, age, gender, education level, waiting time, communication behavior and patient trust level were significantly associated with patient satisfaction independently. Similarly, trust has a positive impact on patient such as adherence to treatment, patient satisfaction and follow-up. Hence, patient satisfaction can be considered as an indirect self-rated subjective health outcomes and also objective health outcomes.

Price et al (2014) showed that improved patient satisfaction was associated with increased levels of adherence to treatment and recommended prevention, improved clinical outcomes, better patient safety within hospitals and less health care utilisation.

Several other studies also revealed that many factors influence patient satisfaction. Some researchers mentioned that among demographic characteristics patient's age, health status, and race consistently had a significant effect on pa-

tient satisfaction whereas institutional characteristics, hospital size also had a significant effect on scores of patient satisfaction (Chen, 2009). Conversely, the results of different research were not consistent, and there were few studies on the importance of factors affecting patient satisfaction.

Strategies for Improving Patient Satisfaction

Patient satisfaction is required to evaluate the quality of health care. It includes communication of nurse with patient, responsiveness of hospital staff, pain management, hospital environment, discharge instructions and follow-up. It provides essential information for healthcare organiser to be involved in measuring patients' expectations and satisfaction with nursing care quality, improving nursing service quality through identification of areas of failure, planning and executing the necessary training.

Quality of care is one of the major components of healthcare services and patients' satisfaction with nursing care is recognised as one of the most important predictors of the overall satisfaction with hospital care and an important goal of any healthcare organisation. The nurses play a vital role in providing psychological support to the patients and their families (Karaca & Durna, 2019). Whereas, for improved patient satisfaction various strategies can be used such as prioritising quality outcomes to maximise value, transparency of patient information, empathetic hospital environment, provider and patient communication.

Health organisations should emphasise on regular in-service teaching programmes for nursing personnel to keep up-to-date knowledge and improve skill on different aspects of patient care. The nursing institution should work in association with the hospital for enhancing students' learning and achieve educational goals as well as for patients' satisfaction (Hall et al, 1993). The hospital authorities should measure and evaluate patient satisfaction levels regularly in order to determine their own dynamics.

Conclusion

A patient desires to have a great experience of care in hospital setting. Service quality outcome can be evaluated by various factors. Health care providers should be focused on improving quality care and services. Quality should be linear and always ascending. Patient satisfaction not only affects the clinical outcome but also retention of patient in hospital. The delivery of the health care should be focussed around the patient and optimum priority should be given to achieve higher

degree of patient satisfaction.

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